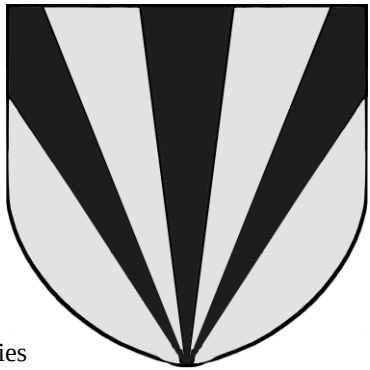
Laugharne

Title of Court Court Leet and Court Baron of Laugharne

Date of formation	Not known
Date of Charter	1307
Lord of the Manor	Not known
Title of Leader of the Court	Portreeve



Offices and Officers of the Court

Portreeve	Colin Webb
Foreman of the Grand Jury	Stephen Davies
Recorder	David Bryan
Chaplain	Rev Barry Davies
Common Attorneys	Geoffrey Davies
	Keith John
Court Bailiff	John Williams

Contact

Lt Col Ralph Tucker TD DL
Corrantaf
Cliff Walk
Laugharne SA33 4SD

CORPORATION RECORDS

Reference code(s): GB 0211 LAUGHARNE

Held at: Carmarthenshire Archive Service

Title: Laugharne Corporation Records

Short Title: Laugharne Corporation records

Creation date(s): [c. 1283]- [20th century]

Level of description: Fonds

Extent: 0.51cubic metres

Name of creator(s): Laugharne Corporation

CONTEXT

Administrative/Biographical history: The town of Laugharne, Carmarthenshire, on the west bank of the Tâf estuary, received its charter from Sir Guy de Brian, Lord of Laugharne, in 1290. He created a Corporation, administered by a portreeve and his court of aldermen and burgesses. The Corporation is still in operation. The Corporation held a court-leet half-yearly dealing with criminal cases, and a court-baron every fortnight, dealing with civil suits within the lordship, especially in matters related to land.

CONTENT

Scope and content/abstract: Minute books, 1711-1966, containing a record of the proceedings of the Courts Leet and Courts Baron of Laugharne including a complete list of burgesses from 1711-1895; Burgess admissions, 1793-1959; legal materials such as leases, 1714-1927 and other other deeds, 1613-1950; financial materials including rent rolls and rent collecting books, 1814-1935, accounts of various officials, 1647-1888, cancelled cheques, 1889-1944, vouchers and receipts, 1728-1935 and other miscellaneous financial documents, 1727-1948; correspondence, 1812-1939; maps and plans, [18th century]-[20th century], and miscellaneous sections on constitution, [c. 1283]-1960; administration, 1568-1966; Acts of Parliament, 1817-1885; Corporation land, 1837-1914 and other miscellaneous, 1704-1931.

ACCESS AND USE

Language/scripts of material: English, Latin

System of arrangement: Arranged into the following : minute books; Burgess admissions; legal material; financial material; correspondence; maps and plans; miscellaneous sections.

Conditions governing access: No restrictions.

Conditions governing reproduction: Usual copyright regulations apply.

Finding aids: Hard copies of the catalogue are available at Carmarthenshire Archive Service.

ARCHIVAL INFORMATION

Appraisal, destruction and scheduling information: All records deposited at Carmarthenshire Archive Service have been retained

Accruals: Accruals are not expected.

Archival history: The archive was stored in the Town Hall, Laugharne though some items such as the town charter were stored in Barclays Bank, St Clears.

Immediate source of acquisition: Handed by Alderman T. Fleming Williams, the Recorder of Laugharne, and Lt Col R. A. Tucker, on 17th March 1966.

ALLIED MATERIALS

Related material: Further records are Carmarthenshire Archives, Laugharne Corporation Additional records.

DESCRIPTION NOTES

Note: Title supplied from contents of fonds

Archivist's note: Compiled by Seri Crawley for the ANW Project. The following sources were used in the compilation of this description: Carmarthenshire Archive Service, Handlist of the Laugharne Corporation Muniments; Williams, E. V., *Laugharne Corporation* (Laugharne, 2001).

Rules or conventions: This description follows ANW guidelines based on ISAD(G) Second Edition; AACR2 and LCSH

Date(s) of descriptions: October 2003

INDEX ENTRIES

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Laugharne (Wales : Borough) | Records and correspondence
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Laugharne (Wales)

Brief history (See also Update Aug 2024

The burgesses of Laugharne were granted a charter by Sir Guy de Brian the Younger when he succeeded to the lordship in 1307: an earlier one may have been granted by his father, Sir Guy de Brian the Elder in 1290. The charter granted to the burgesses 'all the good laws and customs that the burgesses of Carmarthen have up to now used and enjoyed in the time of King John . . . preserving the weights and measures that were in the time of Guy de Brian, the elder.' Guy the Younger was succeeded, in 1350, by his son, Sir Guy de Brian, Knight of the Garter and Lord High Admiral, whose son Guy, died without male issue. By marriage the lordship passed to the families of Devereux and then Percy, until the attainder of Thomas Percy, Earl of Northumberland, when it reverted to the Crown. The lordship was then granted to Sir John Perrot who renovated the castle and adapted it as a baronial hall, as he had done at Carew Castle in Pembrokeshire. When Perrot was attainted, in 1592, the castle and lordship reverted to the Crown once more.

James I handed the lordship to Sir Francis Bacon and others as trustees for Charles, Prince of Wales. During the Civil War the township was garrisoned for the King by the Earl of Carbery but it was occupied by Parliamentary forces until it was taken by the Royalist General, Sir Charles Gerard, on his westward drive in June 1644. Four months later, the town had to surrender to Major General Rowland Laugharne, the Parliamentary commander. At the end of the Civil War the castle and lordship were granted to Sir Sackville Crowe. The present lord of the manor is unknown. The castle passed through several hands until it was presented to the National Trust in 1972.

A Hundred Court was held every fifteen days, the earliest recorded being that of 1 October 1568, held before John Donn, portreeve. The Court Leet meets twice a year: the Big Court, on the first Monday after Michaelmas, and the May Court, on Low Monday. The charter gave the burgesses the right to appoint a Portreeve by common consent, without reference to the lord of the manor. He is elected by the burgesses at the Big Court and is normally re-appointed at the May Court, so that he serves a period of twelve months. The Portreeve presides at all meetings of the Court Leet and appoints the Bailiff and, on retiring, he selects the Foreman for his successor.

The corporation property includes some 350 acres of land which is divided into 76 allotments, or shares. The senior burgesses enter into possession for life of each of these shares by seniority. The Portreeve receives the rent, or the use, of the Portreeve's Field during his term of office

The Portreeve's Breakfast is held on the Sunday following the Big Court election and is attended by the Lord Lieutenant and civic dignitaries. The whole company then proceeds in procession to St Martin's Church for a service the first lesson at which is taken from *Ecclesiasticus* 44 1-15: "Let us now praise famous men".

The Common Walk, the perambulation of the boundaries of the lordship, takes place every third year on Whit Monday and the twenty mile circuit is completed, with not infrequent refreshment, by the afternoon. Boundary stones are marked with the de Bryan coat of arms: *azure,* three piles conjoined in point, *or.**

[*as illustrated above]

LAUGHARNE CHARTER UPDATE*

Raymond Adcock has devoted his time in recent years to researching the award of Laugharne's Charter for a Master's degree, successfully achieved with distinction. This is a brief summary of his findings, drawn from his 20,000-word dissertation, which was presented to Laugharne's History Society meeting on 2 July.

The existing charter document, held in the Carmarthenshire archives, is unsealed and undated. It references Gwydo de Brionne the elder and the younger, as well as Lord Edward, and is witnessed by several local lords.

These details provide clues but are difficult to interpret. One important clue lies in the nature of the detailed provisions made in the charter. There were different types of charter. An inspeximus charter typically began with a regular formula of words and usually required renewal whenever the lord or monarch was replaced. The Laugharne Charter does not contain this word formula, suggesting it is the original grant, which was initially based on one for Breteuil in France.

These were locally granted in the time of Edward I to establish secure settlement by incomers who would support their local French lord. It granted burgage plots in the lee of the castle for them to live on, in return for which they would help to defend the castle in time of attack. It granted them trading rights, denied to the local Welsh, in return for collecting and paying the lord a tax on the trade. It established a corporation with officials to administer local affairs.

In effect it established Laugharne Township. The layouts of properties in Laugharne still reflect the original Norman allocations. This was a time of recurring warfare, and the significant importance of Laugharne, along with Llansteffan and Kidwelly, lay in their castles, controlling access to the three rivers – particularly the Tywi, which led to Carmarthen, the royal stronghold. Ray used processes of elimination to arrive at the date the charter must have been given.

The charter refers to Carmarthen's charter having been issued in 1254, so Laugharne's is later than that. For its settlement to be successful it needed the castle, the presence of incoming settlers and peaceful times. Such conditions did not exist prior to the rebuilding of the castle in 1270, so the charter was issued after that. It refers to the Lord Edward (king from 1272 to 1307), but he gifted these territories to Edmund between 1265 and November 1279, so Edmund's name would have been used if it was in that period.

Hence 1279 is the earliest date it could have been issued and the region enjoyed peace between that date and the outbreak of Llywelyn's second rebellion in March 1282.

Furthermore, the death of one of the witnesses, Patrick de Chaworth, by early 1283 confirms the narrow range of dates for the charter as November 1279 to March 1282.

Thanks to Ray for his very thorough analysis.
Peter Stopp